FACT SHEET

Module 11   **Crashes with Wild Animals**

It's evening and you are driving home. Suddenly, as you exit a curve, a deer stands in the middle of the road. Your heart leaps into your throat as you search for an escape. What do you do?

During 2005, there were over 1,800 crashes involving a wild animal in Montana; two people died. Nationwide, each year there are approximately 500,000 deer/auto collisions resulting in over 100 deaths and thousands of injuries.

If a crash with a deer or other wild animal is unavoidable, experts in these matters recommend the following steps:

- Don't swerve.
- Use controlled braking to slow down
- Hold on to the steering wheel.
- Come to a controlled stop
- When possible, reduce impact by making a glancing hit with controlled steering
- Pull well off the road, turn on emergency flashers and be cautious of passing traffic.
- Do not attempt to move a large animal from the roadway.
- Report damage to the vehicle if damages are above the legal amount required by law ($750).

Photo courtesy of the AAA Foundation

Sometimes you can prevent what could be a deadly collision. The best course of action is to drive defensively and observe the following tips:

- Reduce your speed when signs indicate an area for wild animal crossings.
- Fasten your safety belts before starting the ignition. Safety belts are the best protection for yourself and your occupants in the event of a crash.
- Drive with caution all-year-round in deer habitat, especially on rural two-lane roads.
- Deer can dart out from any direction without warning. Deer often travel in single file. If you see one whitetail or mule deer cross the road, chances are there are more nearby.
- Deer are most active between dawn and dusk, and especially during the fall mating season and in the spring. When they are on the move to find food, they are often near roads, where the grass greens up first.
- Be especially alert near deer warning signs. They are placed at known deer crossing areas and alert drivers to the possible presence of deer